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DEIRDRE WED

AND OTHER POEMS

WILT THOU ADVENTURE ON THE GULFS OF MORNING?
COME, THEN, AND SUFFER THESE
SELF-MUTTERING CITIES THAT HAVE LOST HORIZONS
TO SINK BEHIND THE MOUNTAINS AND THE TREES.

DEIRDRE WED

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

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METHUEN & CO.

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DEIRDRE WED

DEIRDRE WED

I

THE CHANTERS

I

I STOOD on the Hill of Time when the sun was
fled

And my vision sought where to rest, till it knew the
plains

Of my country, the Night's harp, and the moonless bed
Of rivers and bristling forests and sea-board chains.

II

And from many a chanter's mound—none is nameless
there—

Could I hear, amid rumour eternal, the voice ascend:
With the bones of man endureth his floating hair
And the song of his spirit on earth is slow to end.

III

*Speak to me, speak to me, Fintan, dark in the south,
From the west Urmael, and Cir, lying under the pole,
Some chant that ye made, who never spake mouth to
mouth,
But over the ridge of ages from soul to soul.*

IV

*And a strain came out of Dun Tulcha, the yews'
shores,
From Fintan, the elder than yews, the too old for
tears,
"Let us tell him of Deirdre wed, that his heart's
doors
Resound, as when kings arrive, with the trees of
spears."*

II

VOICE OF FINTAN *out of the First Century,*

O SIGHTLESS and rare-singing brotherhood !
 It was the night of marriage. Word had sped,

Tokens gone out to every rath and ring

And every pasture on the woody knolls

Green about Eman, of the [slaughter blithe] *daylong slay*

Of sheep and boar, of badger and of stag,

Reddening the ways up to the kingly house—

Of sheep and goats and of the stintless food

That should be poured out to his beggary

By Connachar, that all time should remember

The night he wed the girl from the elf-mound.

Yonside of Assaroe the swincherd found her

Bred in a peaty hillock of the west

By some old crone. Though tribeless she and wild—

Barefoot, and in the red wool chasing cattle—

Connachar saw and took, biding his time,

And let queens give her skill the winter long
In webs and brews and dyes and broideries
Up to this night of marriage.

Fabulous,

O friends, and dark, and mighty, was his house,
The beam-work in its dome of forest trunks—
They that had been the chantries of the dawn
To blacken songless through a thousand years:—
But never since they sway'd buds in the glens
Or spun the silken-floating violet gleam
Had those spars groan'd above so fierce a breath
Rich with the vapour of the boar. For now
Hundreds with ruddy-glistening faces ran
Jostling round the nine shadows of the blaze
And spread with skins the lengthy beds of men
And soused warm spice of herbs in ale. Here—
thither—
Was rousing of age-slumber'd horns, arranging
Smooth banks throughout the house, strawing of
rushes,
And cauldrons humm'd before the empty throne

Set high in the shadow of the wall, and bubbled
Inaudible, impatient for the king.

But while outside the black roof on the mount
Outwafted was the gold divinity
On swooning wings, the Lake of Pearls far down
Curdled beneath the unseen seed of rain.
Ramparts run there that misty prisoners
Bore once in bags of slime up from the lake
For barriers of the house they most abhorr'd.
And on the hill-side, where that rampart old
Dips lowest to the lakeward, Deirdre stood,
Hearing from distant ridges the faint bleat
Of lambs perturb the dusk—bleats shivering out
Like wool from thorns—there the young Deirdre
stood,

Even she whose climbing beauty pales the world,
Looking far off on hills whence she was come.
Mountains that lift the holiness of Fire!
Fortitudes, ye that take the brunt of fate!
Send her across the bog a little cloud
Full of the ancient savours, full of peace,

And for its drops she will hold up her heart,
O ye that stand in heaven, far removed !
She ask'd aloud, Wherefore were greens so bare
That but an hour ago shook with the thud
Of racers and of hurlers? Was it late?
The wrinkled nurse replied, Had the child eyes?
Back from a hosting and a desperate prey
For corn and mares and rustless brass and beeves
Naois, with the rest of Usnach's sons,
Had come. She had seen him weary go but now
Heavily up the steep through the king's hedge.
Now on the hill-top while the woman spoke
So chanced it. Hanging on the young man's lips
The hosts sway'd round him, and above the press
Connachar, glittering all in torques of gold
And writhen armlets, listen'd from the mound
Of judgment, by the doom-oak at his door.
His beak'd helm took the sunset, but he held
His flint-red eyes in shadow and averse.
And when before him, dark as a young pine,
Unmoved the son of Usnach had told all ;

How half his folk had perish'd in the task
By plague or battle, and how poor a spoil
Was driven home, the king cried, Paragon!
We must go griddle cakes in honey for him,
Bring lavers of pale gold to wash off blood
So precious to us; since for many moons
This champion had forsworn the face of softness
And stretch'd his hungers to the sleety rock,
Call in the smile of women to unlatch
From his grim ribs the iron:—Faugh! Away!
Let Usnach's sons take out again that night
Their broken clans, their piteous cattle thence;
Defeated men should see his gates no more.

The son of Usnach turn'd and went. He ran
Down hill and to the loch to wash his wounds
Chanting—his dark curls waver'd in the wind—
Chanting he strode, tossing a brace of spears,
Lest we should think him humbled. Half-way down
The shapes of women loiter'd in the dusk
And one held backward out her arms to take

The latchets of a cloak. But as Naois
Pass'd by them, closely as is heard a sigh—
His vehement flood of soul fierce for the mere—
Glancing not right nor left, O then I saw
The foot of Deirdre stricken motionless—
I saw the stiff cloak many-colour'd sink
Slow to the grass, wrinkling its blazon'd skins
Behind her.

Gloom suck'd in the banqueters ;
And from the warmth of drinking at his feast
Connachar sent forth to the women's house ;
And heralds bade bring also the gray seer
Cathva, though Cathva had not will'd to come.
But hardly had those erranders gone out
When rose the door-hide : the gray seer came in
Noiseless. He was of fog the night hath spun,
Earth in his hair and on his meagre cheek,
Consumed and shaking, ragged as seaweed,
And to the throne he cried : " Why hast thou called
Me to carousal ? Is this bed my work ?

Nay—too great clearness underneath the thunder
Shew'd insupportably the things to be.

Too long have I, with glamours, drops and runes,
Shook round her cabin low my skirts of storm
To shield thee from that devastating face.

My fault is only that I slew her not.

Know! it was I that, seeing those cradled limbs
Bright with disaster for the realm and thee,
Flung her away among sea-warding mountains.

But Muilréa to Ben Gorm said: *What is this?*

What glee is this disturbs our desolation?

I hear another than the wild duck sheering

Sidelong the wind. Tall as a rush is she,

Sweet as the glitter of the netted lakes!

And Ben Gorm answer'd: *We are sick alone:*

Let us distil the heavens into a child:

Yea, let our bones appear, the black goat starve

Upon our heads, yet shall this wafted seed

Superabound with ripeness we forego.

Dark space shall come to heart—silver of mists—

And thou, blue depth of gorges! Connachar,

I heard the plotters, but I let her live.”
And the king ask’d : “ Hath any seen her there ? ”
And Cathva answer’d, “ Till thy servant found her
She knew not that men were.” Then Connachar
Commanded yet again : “ Bring us in Deirdre.”
Straightway a woman like the claw of birds,
Decrepit, bright of eye, and innocent,
Stood up beyond the fire. Her fingers play’d—
Play’d with a red stone at her breast. He ask’d
“ Who gave thee, hag, the jewel of thy bosom ? ”
Now every drinker from the darkest stalls
Perceived the brooch was Deirdre’s, and a gift
To her from Connachar. Aghast, the woman
Fumbled at her sere breast, and wept and said :
“ It was a gift to me, O Connachar,
This night.” And he, consummate lord of fear,
Our never-counsell’d lord, the Forest-odour’d,
That kept about his heart a zone of chill,
Smiled, though within the gateway of his fort
A surmise crept, as ’neath a load of rushes
Creeps in the stabber. “ Fix the pin, Levarcham,

For she that loses such a brooch will grieve.
Why comes not Deirdre?" "Sir, she is not yet
Duly array'd, and so is loth to come."
O, then, believe me, all the floor was hush,
But a mad discordancy like fifes, drums, brasses,—
Bondmen of old wars on the winds released—
Shook every beam and pillar of the house;
And the king said—"Thou hear'st out of the
marsh
Scream of my stallions mounting on the gale?"
And she said "Yea." "Thou knowest round these
walls
How many chariots now are tilted up?"
And she said "Yea." "Then, woman, bring with
haste
Deirdre, thy charge, into this presence now
Or limb from limb upon the pleasant grass
Those wheels shall parcel thee at dawn." And she
Lifted her hands and closed her eyes and sang,
"She will come back, but I, I shall not bring her!
O rainbow breathed into the dreadful pine,

Why art thou gone from me? Dearer to me
Than the sobbing of the cuckoo to the shore
Why art thou gone from me?" She bow'd and
wept.

And Connachar came from the throne, and grasping
As if he felt no heat, the cauldron's brims
Lean'd through its steams, watching the nurse and
said,

"Will these afflicting tears bring Deirdre in?"
But she look'd up and said: "How shall I bring
her?"

Look now outside thy door, O Connachar!
The black oak with the vision-dripping boughs
Whose foot is in thy fathers' blood of pride
Stagger'd as I came up in the night-blast.
In vain it stretches angers to the sky:
It cannot keep the white moon from escape
To sail the tempest; nor, O king, canst thou!"
The cheek of him that listen'd grew thrice-pale
And his thick nostrils swell'd, his half-shut eyes
Fang'd sheen, and slow dilated; stubbornly

He clutch'd to steady his convulsive frame
The sea-full cauldron ; quick, with efforts vast,
Upheaved and swung and pillar'd it on high—
And hoarsely bade "Take torches." Every man
Kindled in silence at the hearth divine.
Then Connachar pour'd out upon the blaze
The flood within the vat. The roofs were fill'd
With darkness foul, with hissings and with
smoke. . . .

III

VOICE OF CIR *out of a Century more remote,
but unknown,*

AS a horseman breaks on a sea-gulf enwomb'd
in the amber woods

Where tide is at ebb, and out on the airy brim
Glass'd upon cloud and azure stand multitudes
Of the flame-white people of gulls—to the sky-line
dim

All breast to the sun,—and his hoofs expand the
desolate strait

Into fevers of snows and ocean-wandering cries :
Even so, chanters divine, in some woman's fate
At coming of him to be loved do her dreams arise.

And Deirdre the exquisite virgin pale as the coat
of swans

Took the flame of love in her heart at the time of dew

And clad her in ragged wool from a coffer of
bronze
And walked in the chill of night, for her soul was
new.

“ Why thick with the berries of sweetness, ye barren
thorns of the spring ?

I could drink up this tempest cold as a burning
wine.

Why laugh, my grief, for art thou not bride of a
king,

And the drinkers drink to a couch array'd to be
thine ? ”

Where the wounded toss without sleep in the
warrior's hive of stones—

The house Bron Bhearg—she laid her cheek to the
wall

And bless'd them by stealth, with no pang at the
sound of groans

Having that in her rich heart which could heal
them all.

To the fortress-gate on the steep that looketh
toward Creeve Roe

She fled, and spied not a sling-cast off the flare
Of a torch, and the skull fixed over the gate.

And lo,

To the right hand watchmen paced by the water
there.

And the shag-hair'd guard, with a mock, laid spears
in their passage house

Athwart, for who was this phantom 'over the grass
Like a filcher of food? And Deirdre uncover'd
her brows

And cried: "I am Deirdre!" And sullen they
gave her the pass.

And towards Creeve Roe the dip of the cuckoo's
vale was dark

To blindness. She pluck'd her stepson that miry road
Through copses alive with storm, till at length a spark
Shew'd the forge where the smith on the heroes'
way abode.

Now Culann the smith was wise ; and leaping her
spirit stirr'd

With the soft roar of his hide-wing'd fire as it
soar'd :

“ Has the son of Usnach pass'd ? ” “ Yea, gone
back ! ” With the word

He smote on a ribbon of iron to make him a
sword.

And the argentine din of anvils behind her steadily
dwindling

The woman fled to the wastes, till she came to a
Thorn

Black, by the well of a God, with stars therein
kindling

And over it rags fluttering from boughs forlorn.

And she knelt and shore with a knife a lock of
her deathless hair,

And leash'd the black-shuddering branch with
that tress, and pray'd :

“Sloe-tree, thou snow of the darkness, O hear my
prayer,
And thou, black Depth, bubble-breather, vouchsafe
thine aid ;

“From Connachar’s eyes of love let me hide as a
gray mole,
Sons of the earth’s profound, that no weeper spurn !
I have look’d on a face, and its kindness ravish’t
my soul
But deliverance pass’d ; unto you for escape I
turn.”

And loud as the sloven starlings in winter whistle
and swarm
Came the banish’d of Usnach nigh, thrice fifty
strong
As they drove from Eman away on that night of
storm
And Naois spoke with his brothers behind the
throng :

“O, Ailleán, O, Ardan, hark! What cry was that?

For some cry

Rang on my soul's shield; hark! hear ye it now?”

But they rein'd not their weary chariots, shouting
reply

“It was fate, 'twas the curs't hag that is crouch'd
on a bough!”

Tossing they drove out of sight, Naois the last,
and his hood

Rain-dripping mantled the wind. One ran like
a roe,

And call'd on that great name from the night-
bound wood,

“Stay, long-awaited, stay! for with thee I go!”

And his brothers cried “Halt not! the host of
the air makes moan

Or a gang of the wild geese going back to the lake.”

But Naois rear'd up the deep-ribb'd Srōn, “Good
Srōn,

Thou and I needs must turn for our fame's sake.”

And he heard a voice : " Son of Usnach, take me
to be thy wife ! "

He bent from the withers, the blaze of her
trembling drew

The breath from his lips and the beat from his
heart's life ;

And he said, " Who art thou, Queen ? " But
himself knew,

And mutter'd " Return, return, unto him that I
hate. For know

Him least of all I rob, least of all that live. "

But she cried : " Am I then a colt, that ye snare
from a foe

With a bridle's shaking ? I am mine own to give. "

" Thy beauty would crumble away in the spate of
my wild nights,

And famine rake out thine embers, the lean paw
Of jeopardy find thee. He is not rich in delights
Whose harp is the gray fell in the winter's flaw. "

And she laid her arm round the neck of Sron :

“Hast heard,

Horse swollen-vein'd from battle,insulter of death—

Whose back is only a perch for the desert bird—

Whose fore-hooves fight—whose passage is torn
with teeth,

“And dost thou not shudder off the knees of a
master deaf

To the grief of the weak ?” And the lad, deeply-
moved, rejoins

“Mount then, O woman, behind me,”—and light
as a leaf

Drawing her up from his foot to the smoking loins

Shook loose the ox-hide bridle. Even as the great
gull dives

From Muilréa's moon-glittering peak when the
sky is bare,

Scraped naked by nine days' wind, and sweepingly
drives

Overnight-blurr'd gulfs and the long glens of the air,

And feels up-tossing his breast an exhaustless
breath bear on

Spouted from isleless ocean to aid his flight—
So fiercely, so steadily gallop'd the sinewy Sron,
Braced by that double burden to more delight.

Though his mane wrapp'd a wounded bridle-hand,
fast, fast
As giddy foam-weltering waters dash'd by the hoof
Flee away from the weirs of Callan, even so pass'd
Dark plains away to the world's edge, behind and
aloof.

And the rider stoop'd and whisper'd amidst the
thunder of weirs
Such sweetness of praise to his horse in the swirl
of the flood
That Sron twitch'd back for an instant his moonëd
ears—
Strain'd forth like a hare's,—as his haunches up to
the wood

Wrested them. Beaks of magic, the wreckage of
time, came out

And talon'd things of the forest would waft and
sway

But Naois raised unforgotten that battle-shout
That scatters the thrilling wreath of all fears away.

So they measured the Plain of the Dreamers, the
Brake of the Black Ram,

Till the Crag of the Dances before them did shape
and loom.

And the Meads of the Faery Hurlers in silver swam
Then up to the Gap of the Winds, and the far-seen
tomb

White on Slieve Fuad's side. By many a march-
land old

And cairn of princes—yea, to mine own bedside—
They adventured. Think ye, sweet bards, that I
could lie cold

When my chamber of rock fore-knew that im-
passion'd stride?

Had I, too, not pluck'd the webs of rain-sweet
drops from the harp

And torn from its wave of chords an imperishable
love

To sleep on this breast? Here, through the
mountain sharp

My grave-chamber tunnell'd is, and one door from
above

Westward surveys green territories, gentle with
flowers and charm,

But forth from the eastern face of the ridge is
unquell'd

Wilderness, besown with boulders and grass of
harm.

And even in my trance could I feel those riders
approach and beheld

Naois assault the ridge, to the wilderness setting
his face

Expectant, unconscious, as one whom his foes
arouse ;

His heart was a forge—his onset enkindled space—
He shook off the gusty leagues like locks from his
brows.

What should he reckon of Earth save that under his
wounds he felt

Stolen round him, as dreamy water steals round a
shore,

A girdle, the arms of Deirdre, clasp'd for a belt
That terror of main kings should unlock no more?

I was caught from the grave's high gate as that
spume-flaked ecstasy drew

Upward, and wing'd like the kiss of Aengus, strove
For utterance to greet them—encircling their heads
that flew—

But who loops the whirlwind's foot or out-dreameth
love?

He wheel'd round Sron on the crest. Abrupt he
flung back a hand

And spoke, "Dost thou know the truth? Look
where night is low!

Soon the ants of that mound shall shake the ledge
 where we stand :

Now the tribes are summon'd, the Night prepares
 his blow.

“Now wrath spurts, hot from the trumpet—the
 main beacon flares—

Now tackle the arrogant chariots—dogs in their glee
 Hang on the leash-slaves, numb in the cockcrow airs.
 Why, out of all that host, hast thou singled me?”

I heard her behind him breathe, “Because out of
 all that host

Aptest art thou in feats, held in honour more
 Than any save bright Cuchullain.”* He turn'd
 as one lost,

“Is this time a time to mock? Are there not four-
 score

“Better at feats than I, my masters, the noble teams,
 The attemper'd knights of the Red Branch every
 one?

* Pronounced Cuhoollin.

Nay, though I knead up the whole earth in my
dreams,

Nought to such men am I, who have nothing done."

I heard the blowings of Sron, and then lasting
words: "I choose

Thee—wherefore? Ah, how interpret? To-day
on the slope

Where first by the wall I saw thee at gloam of
dews

I knew it was fated. It was not some leaf of
hope

Eddying. Thou wast the token—half of the
potter's shard—

That a chief beleaguer'd cons in his desperate camp
Pass'd in by some hand unseen to the outmost
guard,

And fits to the other half by his wasted lamp.

"Seeing thee, I knew myself to be shaped of the
self-same clay—

Half of the symbol—and broken, mayhap, to serve

As language to them of the night from powers of
the day."

By the Path of the throbbing Curlew no step
may swerve

Where they rode through the Gap ; and at last she
murmur'd, "Dost grieve at me still?"

And he said, "Glorious is it to me that behind us
pursuit

Shall be wide as the red of the morning, for thou
art my will!

To the beach of the world of the dead, and beyond
it to boot,

"Let me take and defend thee." In silence the
hearts of the twain were screen'd,—

But crossing the mires and the torrents I saw
strange ease

Afloat, like a spark, on the woman's eyes as she
lean'd

Forth, and a shadow betwixt her lips like peace.

IV

VOICE OF URMAEL *out of the Sixth Century*

THE slender Hazels ask'd the Yew like night
Beside the river-green of Lisnacaun
"Who is this woman beautiful as light
Sitting in dolour on thy branchéd lawn ;
With sun-red hair, entangled as with flight,
Sheening the knees up to her bosom drawn ?
What horses mud-besprent so thirstily
Bellying the hush pools with their nostrils wide ?"
And the Yew old as the long mountain-side
Answer'd, "I saw her hither with Clan Usnach
ride."

"Come, love, and climb with me Findruim's woods
Alone," Naois pray'd. Through broom and bent
Strown with swift-travelling shadows of their moods,
Leaving below the camp's thin cries, they went.

And never a tress, escaping from her snoods,
 Made the brown river with a kiss content,
So safe he raised up Deirdre through the ford.
Thanks, piteous Gods, that no fore-boding gave,
He should so bear her after to the grave,
Breasting the druid ice, breasting the phantom wave.

“O, bear me on,” she breathed, “for ever so!”

 And light as notes the Achill shepherd plays
On his twin pipes they wanton'd, light and slow,
 Up the broad valley. Birds sail'd from the haze
Far up, where darkling copses over-grow
 Scarps of the gray cliff from his river'd base.
Diaphaneity, the spirit's beauty,
Along the dimnéd coombes did float and reign,
And many a mountain's scarry flank was plain
Through nets of youngling gold betrimm'd with rain.

But when an upward space of grass—so free—
 So endless—beckon'd to the realms of wind
Deirdre broke from his side, and airily
 Fled up the slopes, flinging disdains behind,

And paused, and round a little vivid tree
The wolf-skins from her neck began to bind.
Naois watch'd below this incantation ;
Then upward on his javelin's length he swung
To catch some old crone's ditty freshly sung,
Bidding that shoot be wise, for yet 'twas young.

With gaze in gaze, thus ever up and on
Roved they unwitting of the world out-roll'd,
Their ears dinn'd by the breeze's clarion
That quicks the blood while yet the cheek is cold ;
Great whitenesses rose past them—brooks ran
down—

And step by step Findruim bare and bold
Uplifted. So a swimmer is uplifted
Horsed on a streaming shoulder of the Sea—
Our hasty master, who to such as we
Tosses some glittering hour of mastery.

They heard out of the zenith swoop and sting
Feathery voices, keen and soft and light :

*“Mate ye as eagles mate, that on the wing
 Grapple—heaven-high—hell-deep, for yours is
 flight!*

*Souls like the granite candles of a king
 Flaming unshook amid the noise of night
 What of pursuit, that you to-day shouldst fear
 it?”*

Pursuit they reck'd not, save of wind that pours
 Surging and urging on to other shores
 Over the restless forest of a thousand doors.

“Deirdre,” he cried, “the blowing of thy hair
 Is of the clouds that everlasting stream
 Forth from the castles of those islands rare
 Black in the ragged-misted ocean's gleam
 And glimpsed by Iceland galleys as they fare
 Northward!” But in her bosom's open seam
 She set the powder'd yew-sprig silently ;
 “Speak not of me nor give my beauty praise,
 Whose beauty is to follow in thy ways
 So that my days be number'd with thy days.”

In the high pastures of that boundless place
Their feet wist not if they should soar or run
They turned, at earth astonish'd, face to face
Deeming unearthly blessedness begun.
And slow, mid nests of running larks, they pace
Drinking from the recesses of the sun
Tremble of those wings that beat light into
music.

There the world's ends lay open : open wide
The body's windows. What shall them divide
Who have walk'd once that country side by
side ?

She mused, " O why doth happiness too much
Fountains of blood and spirit seem to fill ?
The woods, over-flowing, cannot bear that such
An hour should be so sweet and yet be still :
Even the low-tangled bushes at a touch
Break into wars of gleemen, thrill on thrill.
O son of Usnach, bring me not thy glories !
Bring me defeats and shames and secret woe ;

That where no brother goeth I may go
And kneel to wash thy wounds in caverns bleak
and low!"

"Here, up in sight of the far shine of sea,
(He sang) once after hunting, by the fire
I knelt, and kindling brushwood raised up thee,
Deirdre, nor wist the star of my desire
Should ever walk Findruim's head with me
Far from a king's loud house and soft attire.
Fain would I thatch us here a booth of hazels,
Thatch it with drift and snow of sea-gulls' wings:
And thy horn'd harp should wonder to its strings
What spoil is it to-night Naois brings?"

"Listen," quoth he, when scarce those words were
gone
(A neck of the bare down it was, a ledge
Of wind-sleek turf, the lovers roam'd upon
And sent young rabbits scuttling to the edge
Of underwoods beneath) "I think that yon
Some beast—haply a stag—takes harbourage."

And Deirdre at a word come back from regions
Of bliss too close to pain, snatch'd with no fear
Out of his hand the battle-haunted spear
And, questing swiftly down the pasture sheer,

Enter'd the yew's black vault : therein profound
Green-litten air, and there as seeking fresh
Enemies, one haunch crush'd against the ground

The grey boar slew'd, tusking the tender flesh
Of shoots, his ravage-whetted bulk around :

But when his ear across the straggling mesh
Of feather'd sticks report of Deirdre found
He quiver'd, snorted ; from his jaws like wine
Foam dripp'd ; along the horror of his spine
The bristles grew up like a ridge of pine.

Mortals, the maiden deem'd that guise a mask—

Believed that in that beast sate to ensnare
He of the red eye—little need to ask

The druid-wrinkled hide, the sluttish hair :
This was to escape—how vain poor passion's task!—
Connachar of the illimitable lair !

He crash'd at her ; she heaved the point embrown'd
In blood of dragons. Heavily the boar
Grazed by the iron, reel'd, leapt, charged once more
And thrice in passage her frail vesture tore.

As when a herd-boy lying on the scar
 (Who pipes to flocks below him on the steep
Melodies like their neckbells, scattering far,
 Cool as the running water, soft as sleep)
Hurls out a flint from peril to debar
 And from the boulder'd chasm recall his sheep—
So with a knife Naois leapt and struck.
Strange, in the very fury of a stride
The grey beast like a phantom from his side
Plunged without scathe to thickets undescried.

Naois sheathed his iron with no stain
 And laugh'd "This shall be praised in revels
 mad
Around Lug's peak, when women scatter grain
 Upon the warriors. Why shouldst thou be sad

Pale victory ?” But she, “ Ah, thus again
Ere night do I imperil thee, and add
Burden to burden.” And he strove to lead her
From grief, and said “ What, bride ! thy raiment
torn ? ”

“ Content thee, O content thee, man of scorn,
I’ll brooch it with no jewel but a thorn ! ”

They seek down through the Wood of Awe that
hems

Findruim, like the throng about his grave,
Dusk with the swarth locks of ten thousand stems
In naked poise. These make no rustle save
Some pine-cone dropt, or murmur that condemns
Murmur ; bedumb’d with moss that giant nave.

But let Findruim shake out overhead
His old sea-sigh, and when it doth arrive
At once their tawny boles become alive
With flames that come and go, and they revive

The north’s Fomorian roar.—“ I am enthralld,”
He said, “ as by the blueness of a ray

That, dropping through this presence sombre-
wall'd

Burns low about the image of a spray—
Of some poor beech-spray witch'd to emerald.

Wilt thou not dance, daughter of heaven, to-day
Free, at last free? For here no moody raindrop
Can reach thee, nor betrayer overpeer ;
And none the self-delightful measure hear
That thy soul moves to, quit of mortal ear."

Full loth she pleads, yet cannot him resist

And on the enmosséd lights begins to dance.
Away, away, far-floating like a mist,

To fade into some leafy brilliance ;
Then, smiling to the inward melodist,

Over the printless turf with slow advance
Of showery footsteps, makes she infinite
That crowded glen. But quick, possess'd by
strange

Rapture, wider than dreams her motions range
Till to a span the forests shrink and change.

And in her eyes and glimmering arms she brings
Hither all promise,—all the unlook'd-for boon
Of rain-bow'd life—all rare and speechless things
That shine and swell under the brimming Moon.
Who shall pluck tympan? For what need of strings
To waft her blood who is herself the tune—
Herself the warm and breathing melody?
Art come from the Land of the Ever-Young? O
stay!

For his heart, after thee rising away,
Falls dark and spirit-faint back to the clay.

Griefs, like the yellow leaves by winter curl'd,
Rise after her—long-buried pangs arouse—
About that bosom the grey forests whirl'd,
And tempests with her beauty might espouse,—
She rose with the green waters of the world
And the winds heaved with her their depth of
boughs.

Then vague again as blows the beanfield's odour
On the dark lap of air she chose to sink,

As, winnowing with plumes, to the river-brink
The pigeons from the cliff come down to drink.

Sudden distraught, shading her eyes, she ceased,
Listening, like bride whom cunning faery strain
Forth from the trumpet-bruited spousal feast
Steals. But she beckon'd soon, and quick with
pain

He ran, he craved at those white feet the least
Pardon ; nor, till he felt her hand again
Descend flake-soft, durst spy that she was weeping
Or kneel with burning murmurs to atone.
For sleep she wept. Long fasting had they gone
And ridden from the breaking of the dawn.

It chanced that waters, nigh to that selve grove,
From Sleep's own lake as from a cauldron pass ;
He led towards their sound his weary love
And lay before her in the fresh of grass
Resting—the white cirque of the cliffs above—
Against a sun-abandon'd stem there was.

Spray from the strings of water spilling over
The weir of rock, their fever'd cheeks bewet ;
And to its sound a voiceless bread they ate,
And drank the troth that is unbroken yet.

Out in the mere—brown—unbesilver'd now
By finest skimming of the elfin breeze—
An isle was moor'd, with rushes at its prow
And fraught with haze of deeply-mirror'd trees ;
And knowing Deirdre still was mindful how
The boar yet lived, that she might sleep at ease
Naois swore to harbour on that islet.
Nine strides he waded in, on footings nine
Deep, deeper yet, until his basnet's shine
Sank to the cold lips of the lake divine.

Divine ; for once the sunk stones of that way
Approach'd the pool-god, and the outermost
Had been the black slab whereon druids slay
With stoop and mutter to the water's ghost,
Though since to glut some whim malign the fay
Had swell'd over the flags. Of all the host

Few save Naois, and at sore adventure
Had ta'en this pass. But who would not have
 press'd
Through straits by the chill-finger'd fiend possess'd
To bear unto that isle Deirdre to rest ?

“ Seal up thy sight ; my shield of iron rims
 Unhook ; cast in this shatter'd helm for spoil.”
'Twas done, and then with rush of cleaving limbs
 He swam and bore her out with happy toil
Secret and fierce as the flat otter swims
 Out of the whistling reeds as if through oil.
And Deirdre, whiter than the wave-swan floating,
Smiled that he suffer'd her no stroke to urge.
At length they reach the gnarl'd and ivied verge
And from the shallows to the sun emerge.

She spreads her wolf-skins on the rock that glows
 And sun-tears wrings out of the heavy strands
Of corded hair. He, watching to the close,
 Sees not the white silk tissue as she stands

Clinging bedull'd to the clear limbs of rose.

She turn'd and to him stretch'd misdoubting
hands :

“Tell me, ere thou dissolve, O wordless watcher,
Am I that Deirdre that would sit and spin
Beside Keshcorran? Dost thou love me? Then
I touch thee. For I, too, have love within.”

O sacred cry! Again, again the first

Love-cry! How the steep woods thirst for thy
voice,

O never-dying one! That voice, like the out-
burst

And gush of a young spring's delicious noise
Driven from the ancient heights whereon 'twas
nursed!

Yet, as death's heart is silent, so is joy's.
His mouth spake not ; for, as in dusk Glen Treithim
Smelters of bubbling gold brook not to breathe
Reek of the colour'd fumes whose hissings wreathe
The brim, he choked at his own spirit's seethe.

Sternly he looked on her and strangely said
 " What touch is thine ? It hath unearthly powers.
I think thou art the woman Cairbre made
 Out of the dazzle and the wind of flowers.
Behold, the flame-like children of the shade,
 The buds, about thee rise like servitors !
It seems I had not lipp'd the cup of living
Till thou didst stretch it out. Vaguely I felt
Irreparable waste. Why hast thou dwell'd
Near me on earth so long, yet unbeheld ? "

Chanters! The Night brings nigh the deeps far off,
 But Twilight shows the distance of the Near ;
And with a million dawns that pierce above
 Mixes the soul of suns that disappear,
To make man's eyes approach the eyes of love
 In simpleness, in mystery and fear.
All blooms both bright and pale are in her gardens,
All chords both shrill and deep under her hand
Who, sounding forth the richness of the land,
Estrangeth all, that we may understand.

So still it was, they heard in the evening skies

Creak as of eagles' wing-feathers afar

Coasting the grey cliffs. On him slowly rise,

As to Cuchullain came his signal star,

Out of the sheeted rivers, Deirdre's eyes.

And who look'd in them well was girt for war ;

Seeing in that gaze all who for love had
perish'd :

The queens calamitous unbow'd at last—

The supreme fighters that alone stood fast—

Fealties obscure, unwitness'd, and long past,

Cloud over cloud—the host that had attain'd

By love,—in very essence, force, heat, breath

Now, now arose in Deirdre's eyes and deign'd

Summons to him — "*Canst follow us?*" it
saith—

Till from that great contagion he hath gain'd

An outlook like to conquest over death.

Then he discerns the solemn-rafter'd world

By this frail brazier's glowings, wherein blend

Coals that no man hath kindled, without end
Born and re-born, from ashes to ascend.

And face to face to him unbarred she cleaves

Woman no more—scarce-breathing—infinite,
Grave as the fair-brow'd priestess Earth receives

In all her lochs and plains and invers bright
And shores wide-trembling where one image
heaves,

Him that is lord of silence and of light.

Slow the God sigh'd himself from rocks and waters
But in his soft withdrawals from the air
No creature in the weightless world was there
Uttered its being's secret round the pair.

Ah ! them had Passion's self-enshrouding arm

Taken, as a green fury of ocean takes,
Through the dense thickets smitten with alarm
To the islet's trancéd core. And Deirdre
wakes,

Lifting hot lids that shut against the storm,
Lying on a hillock, amid slender brakes

Of grey trees, to the babble of enchantments
From mouths of chill-born flowers. The place
was new

To rapture. Branched sunbursts plashing through
After, had laid the mound with fire and dew.

Naois cuts down osiers. Now he seeks

A narrow grass-plot shorn as if with scythe
And over two great boulders' wrinkled cheeks
Draws down and knots a hull of saplings lithe,
Well-staunch'd with earthy-odour'd moss and sticks
Known to the feet of birds. This darkness blithe
He frames against the stars for forest sleepers.

The living tide of stars aloft that crept
Compassion'd far below. No wavelet leapt ;
And deep rest fell upon them there. They slept.

Long, long, the melancholy mountains lay
Aware; mute-rippling shades that isle enwound.
Naois fell through dreams, like the snapt spray
That drops from branch to branch,—that stillest
sound!—

And while from headlands scarce a league away

The din of the sea-breakers come aground
Roll'd up the valley, he in vision govern'd
His ribbéd skiff under Dun Aengus sweeping,
Triumphing with his love, and leaping, leaping,
Drew past the ocean-shelves of seals a-sleeping.

But over starr'd peat-water, where the flag

Rustles, and listens for the scud of teal ;
Over coast, forest, and bethunder'd crag
Night—mother of despairs, who proves the steel
In men, to see if they be dross and slag
Or fit with trusts and enemies to deal
Uneyed, alone—diffusing her wide veils
Bow'd from the heavens to his exultant ear :
A questioner awaits thee : rouse ! The mere
Slept on, save for the twilight-footed deer.

“ Those antler'd shadows of the forest-roof

Nigh to the shore must be assembled thick,”
He thought, “and bringing necks round to the hoof
Or being aslaked and couching, seek to lick

The fawns. Some heady bucks engage aloof,
So sharp across the water comes the click
Of sparring horns." But was it a vain terror,
Son of the sword, or one for courage staunch,
That the herd, dismay'd, at a bound, with a quiver-
ing haunch
Murmur'd away into night at the crack of a branch?

And Deirdre woke. Reverberate from on high
Amongst the sullen hills, distinct there fell
A mournful keen, like to the broken cry
From the house of hostage in some citadel
Of hostages lifting up their agony
After the land they must remember well,
"Deirdre is gone! Gone is the little Deirdre!"
And she knowing not the voice as voice of man
Stood up. "Lie still, lest thee the spirit ban
O vein of life, lie still!" But Deirdre ran
Like the moon through brakes, and saw where
nought had been
On the vague shore what seem'd a stone that stood;

Faceless, rough-hewn, it forward seem'd to lean
Like the worn pillar of Cenn Cruaich the God.
She cried across "If thou with things terrene
Be number'd, tell me why thy sorrowful blood
Mourneth, O Cathva, father!" But the stone
Shiver'd, and broke the staff it lean'd upon,
Shouting, "What! livst thou yet? Begone, begone!"

V

VOICE OF FINTAN *again, out of the First Century,*

LET my lips finish what my lips began.—
 Then to the two beclouded in black boughs
 The third across the water cried "Speak once!
 Though the earth shake beneath you like a sieve
 With wheels of Connachar, answer me this :
 Naois, could she understand his hate
 Whose arm requiteth—far as runs the wind—
 By me, that blow away the gaze and smile
 From women's faces; O could Deirdre have guess'd—
 Mourning all night the fading of her kingdoms
 Fled like a song—what means, *a banished man* ;
 That he and I must hound thee to the death ;
 That thou shalt never see the deep-set eaves,
 The lofty thatch familiar with the doves,
 On thy sad mother Usnach's house again ;

But drift out like some sea-bird, far, far, hence,
Far from the red isle of the roes and berries,
Far from sun-galleries and pleasant dúns
And swards of lovers,—branded, nationless ;
That none of all thy famous friends, with thee
Wrestlers on Eman in the summer evenings,
Shall think thee noble now ; and that at last
I must upheave thy heart's tough plank to crack
it—

Knowing all this, would this fool follow thee ?”

Then spoke Naois, keeping back his wrath,
“Strange is it one so old should threat with
Death !

Are not both thou and I, are not we all,
By Death drawn from the wickets of the womb—
Seal'd with the thumb of Death when we are
born ?

As for friends lost (though I believe thee not),
A man is nourish'd by his enemies
No less than by his friends. But as for her,

Because no man shall deem me noble still,—
Because I like a sea-gull of the isles
May be driven forth—branded and nationless,—
Because I shall no more, perhaps, behold
The deep-set eaves on that all-sacred house,—
Because the gather'd battle of the powers
Controlling fortune, breaks upon my head,—
Yea! for that very cause, lack'd other cause,
In love the closer,—quenchless,—absolute,
Would Deirdre choose to follow me. Such pains,
Seër, the kingdoms are of souls like hers!”
He spoke; he felt her life-blood at his side
Sprung of the West, the last of human shores,
Throbbing, “Look forth on everlastingness!
Through the coil'd waters and the ebb of light
I'll be thy sail!”

Over the mist like wool
No sound; the echo-trembling tarn grew mute.
But when through matted forest with uproar
The levy of pursuers, brazen, vast,

Gush'd like a river, and torch'd chariots drew
With thunder-footed horses on, and lash'd
Up to the sedge, and at the Druid's shape
Their steamy bellies rose over the brink
Pawing the mist, and when a terrible voice
Ask'd of that shape if druid ken saw now
The twain,—advanced out of the shade of leaves
Nor Deirdre nor Naois heard reply ;
And like a burning dream the host, dissolving,
Pass'd. On the pale bank not a torch remain'd.
They look'd on one another, left alone.

THE END

OTHER POEMS

ODE ON A SILVER BIRCH

in St James' Park

I

MUSE, I will show thee, on a grassy mound
Moving with tufted shadows, albeit bare
Herself, for yet young April primes the air
And bloom snow-laden boughs, the tree I love.
London doth compass it with shores of sound
And thrills the buds when there's no breath above
To shake its fountain beauty. Thus I came
Along the courtly mere of thicket isles,
And Spring entoil'd me in a hundred wiles,
Bringing the heart content without a name.
Broods, russet-plumed and emerald, steer'd on
With arrowy wake adown the placid tide
And in that gloomy pool there rode enskied,
Aloof, the stately languor of a swan.

But now the lake sets hither with a breeze
And crooks the peel'd bole of its planes.—Ah, there
Thou shall find audience—yon's my shadowy
love!—

O'er head a rose-grey pigeon beat his wings
About his 'lighted mate, and wooed the bough
And passion born of sight of mortal things
In warmth of living, moved and moves me now
As from the careless height that sways above
Floateth his voice, the soul of greening trees.

2

Approaching 'twixt the herald saplings pale
Whose light arrayment is a whirl of green
Of flamelets dropping for a virgin veil,
I come. Though Hades' crocus-jets are stayed,
Soft! for a golden troop instead upsprung
Gossips apart in yon unfooted glade.
Broke we on earshot of that frolic tongue
Straightway would all be husht, they being afraid
To sing't to simple ear of mutest maid.

3

But thou, still silver Spirit, unappall'd
Standest alone, and with thy senses dim
Feeling the first warmth fledge the unleaféd limb
Hearest not tread of mine, O Sun-enthral'd !
What buried God conceived thee, and forestall'd
In the dull depth thy white and glistering graces—
That fume of netted drops and subtle laces
And listening statue-air, by men miscall'd ?
Shower o'er the blue, and sister of blown surf !
Dream-daughter of the silences of turf !
Couldst thou but waken and recall the Mind
Lifts thee to image, then could I reveal
Wherefore thou seem'st remember'd and I feel
In thee mine own dream risen and divined !

4

Surely the hymn that charm'd thee from the grass
Fashion'd me also, and the selfsame lyre
Sounded accords that out of darkness pass

And in thy beauty and my song conspire ?
The drum of streets, the fever of our homes,
Clangours and murk metallurgy of gnomes,
All are by thee unheard, who dost ignore
The wisdom of the wise, in dead pasts now
Dungeon'd as never to ascend ; but thou
Whose being is for the light, and hath no care
To know itself nor root from whence it sprang,
Wouldst only murmur, in the heavenly air,
“ *The sun, the sun !* ” if but thy spirit sang !

5

O might I show thee by the lute's devising
Man, from thy soft turf, flown with light, arising !
Him, too, doth hope, the boon without a pang,
Summon with thrilling finger forth to hang—
To cast a heaving soul to the wave of wind,
Sun-passion'd and earth-lodged. Ah, Tree serene
Dilating in the glow of the unseen,
We and our roofs and towers magnificent—
Our Fame's heroic head against the sky—

Our loves—and all
That, with our briefness perfect, rise and die,—
Like thee must find
Beauty in a besieging of the dark ;
Our glories on expectancy embark,
And the height of our ecstasy—
The touch of infinity—
Is blind.

A CHARGE

IF thou hast squander'd years to grave a gem
Commission'd by thy absent Lord, and while
'Tis incomplete,

Others would bribe thy needy skill to them—
Dismiss them to the street!

Shouldst thou at last discover Beauty's grove,
At last be panting on the fragrant verge,
But in the track,

Drunk with divine possession, thou meet Love—
Turn, at her bidding, back.

When round thy ship in tempest Hell appears,
And every spectre mutters up more dire
To snatch control

And loose to madness thy deep-kennell'd Fears—
Then, to the helm, O Soul!

Last ; if upon the cold green-mantling sea
Thou cling, alone with Truth, to the last spar,
Both castaway
And one must perish—let it not be he
Whom thou art sworn to obey !

SONG FOR THE FUNERAL OF A BOY

I

ON stems from silver woods
Carry him, young companions, to the glen
Where white Olympus broods ;
Flushes of rustlers shall precede you then
By bush and glade
Low-thrilling and afraid ;
And as along its curve of shore ye pass
The dark tarn ruddied with the pine shall glass,
Moving to hymns out of its lonely ken,
The boy's light bier, with beaded rushes laid.

2

In beeches shall the fawn
An hoof suspend, to learn from that clear sound
His eager mate withdrawn
For ever unto free and sylvan ground.

THE FUNERAL OF A BOY 67

Up in her hold

The wide-wing'd Azure cold

Mantling in gyre on gyre shall mark him come
By root-paven paths borne, and great bee's hum
Swing through your brief procession, winding
round

The endless alleys up that Mountain old.

3

In some low space of green

Where fleecy mists, bright runnels newly rain'd,
And springing wands are seen

But nothing yet to gnarl'd eld attain'd

Let his head nigh

The chrisom violet lie ;

And put at hand the sling to him most dear,
The sheaf of arrows light, the dauntless spear,
The lute untroubled on the heart unstain'd ;
Then, taking hands around him, sing good-bye.

4

Praise limbs that robb'd the cloud

Of vengeful eagles, and for this rough nest,

This egg, embraced the loud
 And everlasting sea-crag's salty breast !
 Praise to the face
 That smiled on nothing base !
 Hymn ye the laughter of his happy soul—
 His secret kindness to your secret dole ;
 The heavenly-minded brook shall mourn him best
 When ye have kiss'd his cheek, quitting the place.

5

This ditty from the brake,
 This rainbow from the waters, fades ; and Night
 That little pyre shall take
 In flame and cloud ;—but O ! when the bloom of
 light
 With breathless glow
 Along the tops of snow
 Tells out to all the valleys Night is done,—
 Think of the boy, ye young companions bright,
 Not without joy ; for he hath loved and gone
 , As dews that on the uplands shine and go !

COME, LET US MAKE LOVE DEATHLESS

COME, let us make love deathless, thou and I,
 Seeing that our footing on the Earth is brief—
Seeing that her multitudes sweep out to die
 Mocking at all that passes their belief.
For standard of our love not theirs we take :
 If we go hence to-day
Fill the high cup that is so soon to break
 With richer wine than they !

Ay, since beyond these walls no heavens there be
 Joy to revive or wasted youth repair,
I'll not bedim the lovely flame in thee
 Nor sully the sad splendour that we wear.
Great be the love, if with the lover dies
 Our greatness past recall,
And nobler for the fading of those eyes
 The world seen once for all.

CLAVIERS AT NIGHT

*I WATCH'D a white-hair'd Figure like a breeze
Pass, with a smile, down the bare galleries
And heard his ancient fingers, as he went,
Muse on the heart of each blind instrument.*

SPINET

Shoaling through twilight to my silver tinglings
The great-ruff'd ladies beset with pearl
Come out with the gallants in gems of Cadiz
In lofty capriols with loud spur-jinglings
In Roman galliard and in blithe coranto
Learnt in far Otranto
Brought home in the galleys of the Earl—
Storm-riding galleys of the haughty Earl—
To English vallies.
They come
With reverences stately at meeting

In mockeries sedately retreating
And stomachers and buckles and rings
Shake a maze of jewels to the measured strings,
Of trembling jēwels.

Ay, moonlight's fair in yew-clipt alleys,
And young Love fledges
His shafts 'twixt cypress hedges.
Follow the rout, and watch in gentle wind
The springing moonbeam of the fountain sway'd
Like to a mountain maid
Who turns with poisēd jar
From bubbling hollow cool.

“ Behold, how't tosses rain of Pleiads hither
Into main blackness of the pool—
Rings ever shimmering out and sheen reborn ;
So, thou and I, lady, must die
To wake, as echoes wake, of yonder horn
With volcelest over the hills of morn.
Ah, satin-quilted kirtle,
Ah, pearled bosom,

Let slip one flake of blossom,
Deign but a sprig of myrtle,
To the poor Fool, panting on his bended knee!"
But silent grow the long swards cedar-shaded
Where the young loves were sitting ;
And lo, in the silver-candled hall
The bat is flitting, flitting.
The tapestries are dusk upon the wall
And the ladies bright, brocaded,
All, with their blushes, faded.

HARPSICHORD

Now ye, the delicate patterers of the hush,
Wings, hither !
Scarce-rustlers of the sere involvéd leaf
Who mourn for summers past with elfin grief,
Ye who can hear along the inmost lawn
Ebbings and flowings shrill
When subtle ballads net the rime-cold daffodil
And drift over the blue turf so nigh dumb
They startle not from's gloom e'en the airy fawn.

Old Antony on his Nile-barge at dawn
Caught your deck-walkings countless overhead
And eased with ye a heart eclipsed and dead.
Come swift, come soon
Drift, like a veil over the moon,
And rising round this crumbling Keep
Shed ye, upon the sleepless, sleep.

CLAVICHORD

Wherefore, poor Fool, dost lie—
Love, cap and bells put by—
On thy pallet-bed so stark?
“I am girt, soul and limb,
Gainst horror dim.
Ear tense to hark
Mine eyeballs strain and swim
Drowning in foamy dark.
Comes no shock
Nor earthly feet
But the heart's blood, ebb'd with the chill tower-
clock

To a single beat,
Clots to a fear
That God may appear—
None other eye being near—
And bare of his mantle of law
Stand, a giant Spirit beautiful
Sombre, pale, in avenging mail,
Wings folded, on this planet's skull ;
And before Him dropping like fine rain,
A veil o' the cloud o' the dust of kings
Noiseless descending the old Abyss. . .
Ah then, after this
How gentle through the dark paths of the brain
Comes the faint noise of outer things ;
The whirr and shower of wings—
Satin shufflings of ivy leaves
Ranging like bees the leaden pane—
Jolting of carters, cries of falconers—
The blessed courtyard stirs
That do in mercy say
Thou hast another day."

THE MAN DIGGING

THE isle was barren. Far as hawk may scan
In moors it roll'd up to a headland bare
Save for one narrow patch, by ceaseless care
Sumptuous with corn. Against the sky a Man
Digging the waste I saw,—bow'd veteran
A stubborn spade he drave in stubborn ground
And root and rock flung sheer without a sound
Over the bleak edge. . . . Then anew began.

“You, who have lodged in the teeth of the abyss
Your cabin low, and triumph rich as this
Wrung from the ocean-bitter mountain side,
What help'd you most to bring such treasure out?
He stood, and after scrutiny replied,
“The thing on which I lean, the Spade of Doubt.”

SCHIEHALLION

FAR the grey loch runs
Up to Schiehallion.
Lap, lap the water flows
Where my wee boatie rows ;
Greenly a star shows
Over Schiehallion.

She that I wander'd wi'
Over Schiehallion,—
How far ayont your ken,
Craggs of the merry glen,
Stray'd she, that wander'd then
Down fra Schiehallion !

Sail of the wild swan
Turn to Schiehallion !

SCHIEHALLION

77

Here where the rushes rise
Low the black hunter lies ;
Beat thou the pure skies
 Back to Schiehallion !

THE SHELL

I am a Shell out of the Asian sea,
But my sad Pearl is gone,
Risen to be Goddess—Venus green is she
And I cast up alone.

Yet some night shall her brilliance stoop and take
Unto her ear this shell,
And hear the whisper of her own heart-break . . .
All that I serve to tell.

THE ROCK OF CLOUD

WE heard a chanting in the fog
On the frore face of the sea,
And stay'd the galley like a log
To sound that mystery.

And men throng'd up into the bow
And hail'd the curling rack,
“*What demon or what spirit thou?*”
And the lone voice came back,

Came as of one so evil-starr'd
That he hath done with grief,
In monotone as keen and hard
As the bell swung from a reef:

“Human I am—would I were foam—
Row hither; ye may hear

Yet shall not save nor bring me home
Seek ye a thousand year."

"*Keep a stout hope.*" "I keep no hope."
"Man alive" "Spare your toil—"
"*We are upon thee!*" "Nay, no rope
Over the gap shall coil."

"*Who art thou?*" "I was Pilot once
On many a ship of mark :
Went aboard—spoke to none—but steer'd ;
And dropt off in the dark.

"But one night—Christ!—we struck—we sank.
I reach'd this rock of wings
Whereby from every boulder's flank
The brown sea-ribbon swings.

"Here, where the sole eye of the Sun
Did scorch my body bare,
A great Sea-Spirit rose, and shone
In the water thrill'd with hair. . . .

“ She lay back on the green abyss
Beautiful ; her spread arms
Soothed to a poise—a sob—of bliss
Huge thunders and alarms.

“ Her breasts as pearl were dull and pure,
Her body’s chasted light
Swam like a cloud ; her eyes unsure
From the great depths were bright.

“ There was no thing of bitterness
In aught that she could say ;
She call’d my soul, as down a coast
The Moon calls bay beyond bay
And they rise—back o’ the uttermost—
Away, and yet away :—

“ I chose thee from the sinking crews—
I bore thee up alive—
Now durst thou follow me and choose
Under the world to dive?

“Come! we will catch when stars are out
The black wave's spitting crest
And still, when the Bull of Dawn shall spout,
Be washing on abreast ;

“Or thee a flame under the seas
Paven with suns I'll hide,
Deathless and boundless and at ease
In any shape to glide.

“All waters that on Earth have well'd
At last to me repair,—
All mountains starr'd with cities melt
Into my dreamy air.

“Set on thy peak under the brink
I'll shew thee Storms above,
The stuff of kingdoms :—they shall sink
While thou dost teach me love ;
On beaches white as the young Moons
I'll sit, and fathom love.'” . . .

“ *And what saidst thou ?* ” “ From over sea
I felt a sighing burn
That made this jagg'd rock seem to me
More delicate than fern ;

“ And faint as moth-wings I could hear
Tops of the pine-tree sway
And the last words spoken in mine ear
Before the break of day.

“ And I cried out agonied at heart
For her that sleeps at home,
'Brightness, I will not know thine art,
Nor to thy country come !'

“ Straightway she sank—smiling so pale—
But from the seethe up-broke—
Never thrash'd off by gust or gale—
White, everlasting smoke.

“ It feels all over me with stealth
Of languor that appals ;

It laps my fierce heart in a wealth
Of soft and rolling walls ;

“ This mist no life may pass, save these
Wave-wing'd, with shrieking voice ;
Stars I discern not, nor the seas—”

“ *O, dost not rue thy choice ?*”

“ Rue it? Now get back to the Deep,
For I doubt if men ye be :
No ;—I must keep a steady helm
By the star I cannot see.”

Passion o' man ! we sprang to oars,
And sought on, weeping loud,
All night in earshot of the shores
But never through the cloud.

SHE COMES NOT WHEN NOON
IS ON THE ROSES

SHE comes not when Noon is on the roses—
Too bright is Day.

She comes not to the Soul till it reposes
From work and play.

But when Night is on the hills, and the great Voices
Roll in from Sea,
By starlight and by candlelight and dreamlight
She comes to me.

THE NIGHT

I PUT aside the branches
That clothe the Door in gloom ;
A glow-worm lit the pathway
And a lamp out of her room
Shook down a stifled greeting :
How could it greet aright
The thirst of years like deserts
That led up to this night ?

But she, like sighing forests,
Stole on me—full of rest,
Her hair was like the sea's wave,
Whiteness was in her breast,—
(So does one come, at night, upon a wall of roses.)

As in a stone of crystal
The cloudy web and flaw

Turns, at a flash, to rainbows,
Wing'd I became—I saw
I sang ;—but human singing
Ceased, in a burning awe.

Slow, amid leaves, in silence—
Rapt as the holy pray—
Flame into flame we trembled
And the world sank away.

MAURYA'S SONG

RUSHES that grow by the black water
When will I see you more?

When will the sorrowful heart forget you,
Land of the green, green shore?

When will the field and the small cabin
See us more
In the old country?

What is to me all the gold yonder?

She that bore me is gone.

Knees that dandled and hands that blessed me
Colder than any stone;

Stranger to me than the face of strangers
Are my own
In the old country.

Vein o' my heart, from the lone mountain
The smoke of the turf will die
And the stream that sang to the young childer
Run down alone from the sky :
On the door-stone, grass,—and the cloud lying
 Where they lie
 In the old country.

T I R E D with the day's monotony of dreaméd
joys

I turn to a requickening voice,
A voice whose low tone devastates with nightly thrill
The cities I have wrought at will :
Stone forts depart, and armies heroic flee away
Like the wild snow of spray.
Deep down the green Broceliande's branch'd
corridors

That voice of April pours ;
Light as a bird's light shadow fled across my pages
A touch disturbs the ages,
And the crags and spears of Troy and the courts
of Charlemain,
Odin, and the splendid strain
Of Cuchullain's self, that with his heart's high
brother strove,—
Fade, at the low voice I love.

YOU WERE STAY'D

YOU were stay'd in heart on heaven,
I by none but you forgiven,—
You unto your Light are taken,
I of all, in you, forsaken.

Where the night is never broken
Where for long no speech hath spoken,
There the ears no longer hearken,
There the eyeballs wane and darken.

Yet at hours my soul—so bounded—
By that gloom like blood surrounded—
Sees an ancient daylight burning—
Hears departed feet returning.

THE BLOOM

WHO are these ancients, gnarl'd and moss'd
and weigh'd

This way and that, under the sluggard blue
And shine of morning—these whose arms are laid
Low to the grasses and the sheets of dew—
These bowers rugg'd within and thickly knit
But feather'd over with a roseate white
So frail that the breeze's touch dismantles it
And brings from cradled nurseries in flight—
Snow-soft—the petals down
In shadows green to drown?

We are the matrons. Bent are we and riven
Under such years of ripeness manifold
That unto us a special grace is given,—
To wear a virgin's beauty being old.

Noiseless we wear it ; round us in the croft
 These whisperers are leaves of other trees,
Babblers that have not learn'd by fruitage oft
 To shade the heart with wide serenities
 On tendons knit to bear
 Sweetness in stormy air.

IN THE ROMAN AMPHI- THEATRE, VERONA

TWO architects of Italy—austere
Men who could fashion nothing small—
refused

To die with life, and for their purpose used
This dim and topless Amphitheatre.

Some Cæsar trench'd the orb of its ellipse
And call'd on distant provinces to swell
Resonant arches whence his World could scan,
Tier above tier, the fighters and the ships.

But Dante—having raised, as dreamer can,
Higher tenfold these walls immutable—
Sole in the night arena, grew aware
He was himself the thing spectacular
Seized by the ever-thirsting gaze of Hell,—
Here, on the empty sand, a banish'd man.

A WINTER SONG

To Alice Meynell

LADY, through grasses stiff with rime
And wraith-hung trees I wander
Where the red sun at pitch of prime
Half of his might must squander ;
Narrow the track
As I look back
On traces green behind me,—
I go alone
To think upon
A face, where none
Shall find me.

Birds peal ; but each grim grove its shroud
Retains, as to betoken
Though the young lawn should wave off cloud
These would have Night unbroken,—

Desire no plash
Of the Lake awash—
No gold but gold that's glinted
In still device
From the breast of ice
Whose summer cries
Have stinted.

But in a great and glittering space
The black Elm doth restore me
To you. Empower'd with patient grace
Musing she stands before me,—
Her webs divine
Ghosed with fine
Remembrance few can capture ;
Her very shade
On greenness laid
Is white,—is made
Of rapture !

THE NUTTER

I

I AM the Autumn. Rising from the throne
I watch the pageant of my courtiers pass ;
Chestnuts' canary-feather'd beauty strown—
The lime's gold tribute at his foot amass—
Then fragile jewels from the larches blown
Enrich with disarray the trembling grass,
Until the beggar'd elms, too proud to bend,
Emblaze a hundred winds with my rash kingdom's
end.

2

But look ! within the beech's burning house
Some Nutter, deaf to shouts of fellow-thieves,
Hath flung him with his crook to dream and drowse
Flush-cheek'd, alone, upon the mounded leaves.
The curious squirrel headlong from his eaves
Creeps down to mark : then drops with sudden
souse ;
The still-come culvers burst away—and flits
The beechmast-feasting multitude of shadowy tits.

3

Where are thy friends? Gone on to sack the
glades,
My rooms of tatter'd state, not to return.
No moth-bright brambles and no rainy braids
Of ivy, mid the sheen and smoke of fern,
Could trammel-up the tempest of their raids.
Up, boy ! pursue them down the misty burn !
But on his bosom tann'd, in slumber fast,
Patter'd the mimic shower of ever-dropping mast.

4

What, lad? The last of my poor banquet lose
To thy wild kin of air? For them the dell
O'er-briar'd hath lean rose-berries and yews
And scarlet fruits of ash, that ere they swell
The missel-thrushes, fluttering, poise to choose,—
Privet is theirs and briony as well,
And redwings wait for the frost-mellow'd sloe,
Their orchard is the spinney-side—Awake, and
go!

5

Leaf-driven, my young October in a while
Awoke bemazed—on ragged knee arose
Snatch'd at his crook, and hid a shaméd smile
Vaulting the ruddy brambles. As he goes
Far off I hear his voice; so freshet flows
Warbling to wander many a forest mile—
So Dryad may her rooty pool forsake
Afraid, or antler'd shadow melt into the brake.

6

And I go too,—ah! not with mortal things
Naked of riches here to flutter down—
But soar and tremble in a million wings
Above the fen, the coastland, and the town
Forth by the dark sea's sunken islands bounē
Sweeping to choir Apollo where he sings
Unslain! The midsea lamp, that hears the sky
Roaring all night with passage, knows ~~that~~ it is I.

SHAKESPEARE

IF many a daring spirit must discover
The chartless world, why should they glory
 lack?

Because athwart the skyline they sank over
Few, few, the shipmen be that have come back.

Yet one, wreck'd oft, hath by a giddy cord
The rugged head of Destiny regain'd—
One from the maelstrom's lap hath swum aboard—
One from the polar sleep himself unchain'd.

But he, acquainted well with every tone
Of madness whining in his shroudage slender,
From storm and mutiny emerged alone
Self-righted from the dreadful self-surrender :

Rich from the isles where sojourn long is death
Won back to cool Thames and Elizabeth,
Sea-weary, yes, but human still, and whole,—
A circumnavigator of the soul.

NOTES

NOTES

Deirdre Wed. This episode of thirty hours, delivered by the Three Voices, does not occur in any of the versions of the famous "Tragical tale of the Sons of Usnach." But the manner of Deirdre's wooing of Naois is based on an incident in a Gaelic version of that tale, in which, on a day (not her marriage day) Deirdre and her women companions "were out on the hillock behind the house enjoying the scene and drinking in the sun's heat. What did they see coming but three men a-journeying. Deirdre was looking at the men that were coming, and wondering at them. When the men neared them, Deirdre remembered the language of the huntsmen and she said to herself that these were the three sons of Usnach, and that this was Naois, he having what was above the bend of his two shoulders above the men of Erin all." The three brothers went past without taking any notice of them, and without even glancing at the young girls on the hillock. "What happened but that love for Naois struck the heart of Deirdre, so that she could not but follow after him. She trussed her raiment and went after the three men that went past the base of the knoll, leaving her women attendants there. Ailleán and Ardan had heard of the women that Connachar, King of Ulster, had with him, and they thought that if Naois their brother saw her he would have her himself, more especially as she was not married to the king." They perceived the woman coming and called on one another to hasten their steps as they had a long distance to travel

and the dusk of night was coming on. They did so. She cried three times "Naois, son of Usnach, wilt thou leave me?" "What cry is that which it is not well for me to answer, and not easy for me to refuse?" Twice the brothers put him off with excuses. "But the third time Naois and Deirdre met, and Deirdre kissed Naois three times and a kiss to each of his brothers." All other incidents in the episodic poem *Deirdre Wed* are new.

Fintan ; *Urmael* ; *Cir*. These were old bards. I have myself found and explored a tomb like that of *Cir*, caverned through a hill-ridge, not far from Eman and Armagh, just as it is described in the poem. But the curious may rediscover it for themselves.

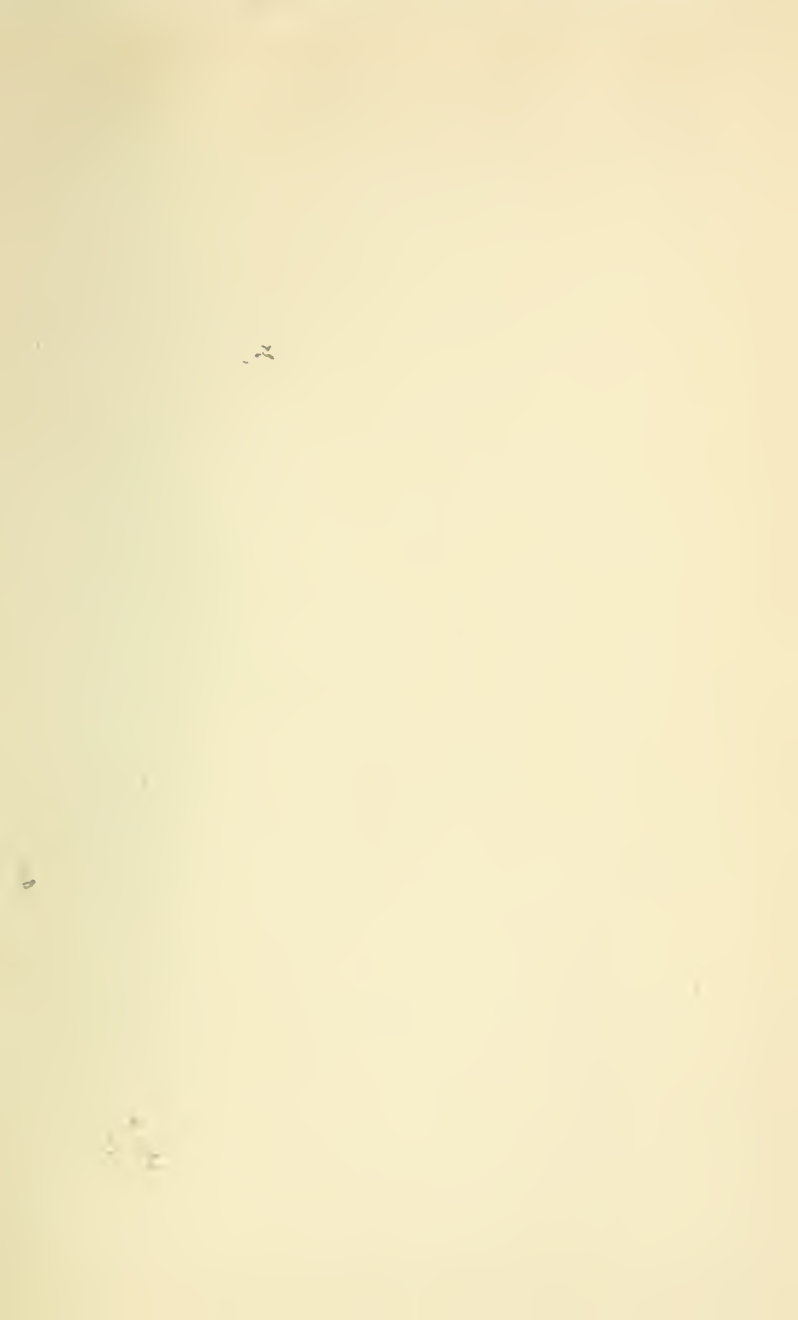
Connachar. This king, or terrestrial divinity, is generally known as Conchobar, or Conor, King of Ulster (Uladh) and Arch-King of Ireland. He is chronicled as reigning about the time of the Incarnation of Christ.

Eman, or Emain Macha, was the chief palace of Connachar. It is still seen and named in the "Navan Ring"—enormous earthworks on a hill about two miles west of Armagh. The people from the town and country-side still go up to dance there on holidays. Traces of the Lake of Pearls—where jewels were cast in on a sudden flight, lie in a marsh under Eman. The *Callan*, or "loud-sounding" river, runs not very far off.

Dun Aengus. A prehistoric stone fortress—singularly vast—on the edge of the cliffs of Arran Môr, an island in the Atlantic, west of Galway. The walls are very massive, and lie half-circle-wise, as if half had broken off and fallen into the sea.

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